Examiner, Sutcliffe et al. '122 discloses each and every element of claims 1 and 12-17. Indeed, Sutcliffe does suggest a preference-ranked query..."Thus, for twenty criteria elements, the elements would be assigned a priority from one to twenty, with each element having a unique priority between one and twenty inclusive. The priority data assigned to each element can be included as part of a search string." (Column 9, lines 25-36). Thus, for each criteria data element that matches a corresponding characteristic data element of another user a number of points corresponding to the weight would be added to a running total...to prioritize the closest registration records based on said query record" (Sutcliffe, col. 9, lines 59-65). However, Sutcliffe merely applies a matching algorithm and then prioritizes the output list. Sutcliffe does not apply a cross-matching algorithm. As recited in claim 6, the present preference levels comprise "at least seven discrete preference levels substantially corresponding to "must", "strongly want", "want", "don't care or no preference", "don't want", "strongly don't want" and "must not be". These are assigned a numerical rating. As recited in claim 13, the software matching engine "assigns a numerical score *for each match* that is weighted in accordance with said preference ranking." Moreover, as recited in claim 14, the software matching engine "assigns a numerical score *for each non-match* that is weighted in accordance with said preference ranking." The Examiner apparently misreads claim 14, stating that "As per claim 14, Sutcliffe teaches all the claimed subject matters as discussed in claim 13, and further discloses said computer software matching engine assigns a numerical score *for each match* that is weighted in accordance with said preference ranking (Sutcliffe, col. 9, line 55, col. 10, line 18). Sutcliffe weighs each match, *but does not weight each non-match and each no-preference item as well.* Indeed, as stated at column 10, lines 5-19 of Sutcliffe, it is clear that non-matches are

not even considered. Where there are no matches, there are no results and the search must be repeated (column 10, line 13). Claims 1 and 12 are herein amended to reflect this difference more clearly, and now require "assigning a positive integer numerical score for each match that increases in accordance with an increasing preference ranking, assigning a nominal positive numerical score for each match designated no-preference, and assigning a zero or negative score to each non-match..." Given this particular preference rating the matching engine then totals the scores. In view of this new limitation, claims 1 and 12 should be patentably distinguished.
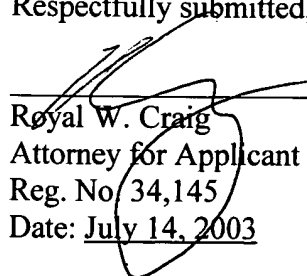
Claims 2-4, 7-12 and 15-19 depend from claims 1 and 12, respectively, and are similarly distinguished.

Claims 5, 6, 13-14 and 20 are herein canceled as being duplicitous in view of the amendments to claims 1 and 12.

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In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance, and such a Notice is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX A: REDLINED CLAIMS

Claims 5, 6, 13 and 14 are canceled.
Redlined versions of claim 1, 12 and 17:

1.(Once amended) A method for matching one set of wants with a database of profiles based on cross-matching of corresponding want data to profile data, comprising the steps of:
  compiling a database of registration records each identifying and describing actual characteristics of an entity;
  compiling a query record [describing] comprising desired characteristics of an entity[, said query record including a plurality of] and incremental preference rankings associated with said desired characteristics by prompting a user to enter subjective data identifying and describing their wants by a series of online forms displaying a range of discrete choices for each data element, plus a range of user-selectable preference levels for each data element;
  matching said actual characteristics with said desired characteristics [by] and assigning a positive integer numerical score for each match that [is weighted] increases in accordance with [said] an increasing preference ranking, assigning a nominal positive numerical score for each match designated no-preference, and assigning a zero or negative score to each non-match; and
  totaling said scores to prioritize the closest registration records based on said query record.

12.(Once amended) An automated system for matching a set of desired subjective characteristics to a most suitable profile of actual objective characteristics from among a database of such objective profiles, comprising:
  a database of profile records each comprising a collection of data elements describing actual objective characteristics of an entity;
  a succession of computer forms navigable by a graphical user interface for prompting a user to enter a query record describing desired characteristics of an entity, said query record including a plurality of incremental preference rankings associated with said desired characteristics;
  a computer software matching engine for scoring the conformity of the query record of desired characteristics with said profile records of actual characteristics based on correspondence of said data records as statistically weighted by said preference rankings, said matching engine assigning a positive integer numerical score for each match that increases in accordance with an increasing preference ranking, assigning a nominal positive numerical score for each match designated no-preference, and assigning a zero or negative score to each non-match, said matching engine then totaling said scores;
  an output display for displaying a list of profile records that conform to said query record in prioritized order of the matching engine score.

17.(Once amended)   The automated system for matching a set of desired subjective characteristics to a most suitable profile of actual objective characteristics according to claim [17] 16, wherein said succession of computer forms prompts a user to enter subjective data identifying and describing their wants by displaying a range of discrete choices for each data element, plus a range of user-selectable preference levels for each data element.